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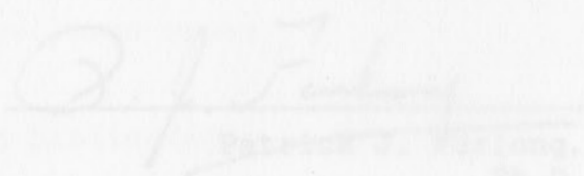
My Elba Odyssey


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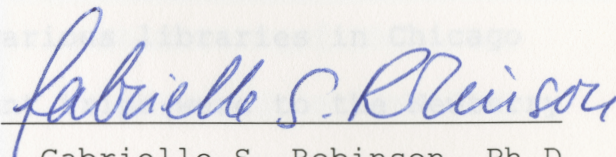
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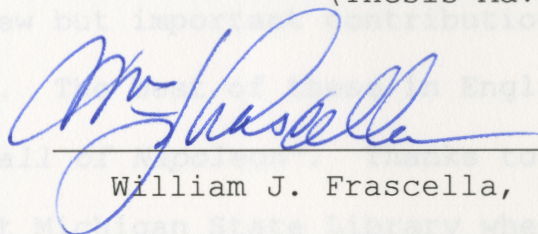
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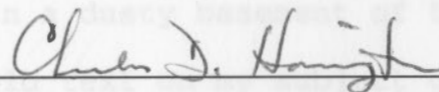


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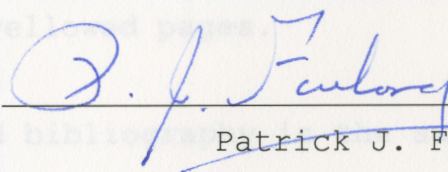
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quotations is deliberate because much of what I read has
been assimilated and used to direct even further inquiry.

Preface

This is not intended as a History paper, nor an English
paper.

This research project propelled itself for two years. It included several trips to various libraries in Chicago and Michigan. The most pleasant trips were to the Newberry Library in Chicago for original source materials. The University of Chicago had few but important contributions to the research about Napoleon. The best of these in English was Oscar Browning's *"The Fall of Napoleon"*. Thanks to the assistance also available at Michigan State Library where in the Special Sections department in a dusty basement of the building, I discovered only one old text on my subject of Elba. This ancient volume by Arsenne Theibaut DeBerneaurd, published in 1814, had dried yellowed pages.

The attached annotated bibliography is the sum total of where this exploring compulsion took me. There are thousands of books in every language about Napoleon and far too few references to the island of Elba during his brief exile there. It was on Elba itself that I had to discover what the island was about. The *Biblioteca* in the main port of Portoferraio had only a couple of books in English. The Tourist Organization on Elba loaded me with information about every aspect of the island, in *Italian*. Use of few

quotations is deliberate because much of what I read has been assimilated and used to direct even further inquiry. This is not intended as a History paper, nor an English paper. It is not a travelogue nor only a study of social customs on Elba, Italy. It is a combination of the interdisciplinary nature of what is required to live life. On this background, I paint what is, essentially, my personal journey. As the pivotal contributor of time, energy, contacts and automobile, Angelo Sambuco, who was the only one who spoke English, put himself at our disposal. Aunt Eda managed to find everything I needed without my asking and who, I suspect, was the prime mover behind the scenes. This project has changed my life, created indelible memories and given me an insight not possible in any other way.

Appreciation for my advisor, Dr. Gabrielle Robinson turned to admiration and extends to many who gave me the confidence I needed, like Dr. William Frascella, or showed me the essentials of research and understanding like Dr. Patrick Furlong. There are too many to mention but my husband Richard's patience and encouragement are paramount to any success I can ever achieve.

Acknowledgments

I have an enormous amount of gratitude to my Italian cousin, Maria Teresa, and to the Signorini family who facilitated every aspect of the adventure. Graziano, her son, provided a beautiful condo in Porto Azzuro. Erberto Bandini, the ex-Marshall and brother-in-law was an inspiring font of informative assistance. As the pivotal contributor of time, energy, contacts and automobile, Angelo Sambuco, who was the only one who spoke English, put himself at our disposal. Aunt Eda managed to find everything I needed without my asking and who, I suspect, was the prime mover behind the scenes. This project has changed my life, created indelible memories and given me an insight not possible in any other way.

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Photographs / Maps

Airport, Latescova, Table of Contents

Barbarossa Beach, following page 44

I.	Pilgrimage to My Father's House	1
II.	Napoleone at Elba	17
III.	Consideration of Elba's Past	40
IV.	The New Conquerors	48
V.	Epilogue	75
VI.	Annotated Bibliography	82
VII.	Vita	92

Marciana forest path and chestnut season, following

page 68

Montserrat Mountain church, following page 66

Napoleone as Emperor, following page 23

Napoleon, Warrior on horseback, following page 18

Napoleon's Death Mask, following page 61

Photographs / Maps

Octopus in October, following page 53

Airport Latoscana, following page 70

Barbarossa Beach, following page 46

Capoliveri, following page 65

Family photographs, following page 74

I Mulini and San Martino, homes of Napoleon on Elba,
following page 27

San Stefano, following page 66

Island of Pianosa, following page 39

Street dancing and entertainment, following page 74

Map I Elba's Location in Europe, following page 1

Tower of San Giovanni & Male Street Bastions, following

Map II Ferry System to Corsica, following page 68

Marciana forest path and chesnut season, following
page 68

Monserato Mountain church, following page 66

Napoleon as Emperor, following page 23

Napoleon, Warrior on horseback, following page 18

Napoleon's Death Mask, following page 61

Octopus in October, following page 53

Mountain villages, following page 46

Rio Marina, port of Romans, following page 43

Rio Nell'Elba, built to escape pirates, following
page 46

Roman Ruins at Villa della Grotte, following page 43

San Stefano, following page 66

Street dancing and entertainment, following page 74

Tower of San Giovanni & Male Steet Meetings, following
page 55



Map I
Elba's Location in Europe

Pilgrimage to My Father's House

The idea for this project actually began in my childhood imagination. Instead of the usual fairy tales, at bedtime my father told stories about the simple people on the small island of Elba off the coast of Italy, where he was born. (See map). Like my favorite renaissance tales of Boccaccio¹ they were humorous and usually had a moral. These colorful images of how different yet universally human, cultures can be, created my long standing curiosity for foreign lands, especially Elba. As a sailor in the Merchant Marine, his exotic global travels began at the age of 18. He left his job in the mines of Rio Marina, beside his father, and decided to explore his opportunities across the sea. The family he left behind included two sisters, one older, Maria, and one younger, Eda. Even though Elba was a subject of my fascination, until middle age, I was too busy raising a family to voyage out of the United States. Yet, why my father left this beautiful island of my fantasy became clear, only now, as I was sailing for the first time

¹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, a hundred stories told in ten days by seven women and three men, for amusement, to wile away the time while they were shut away in the country to flee the plague in the middle ages.

to the island of Elba on a ferry across the Mediterranean Sea. Career opportunities had to be limited on this minute place. Most of my father's childhood friends, his "paisani", also made the break from Elba to America and came through the port of New York, where my father had jumped ship. At our apartment in the Bronx, they always had a welcoming glass of wine, and plenty of food to accompany the rest of the advice about how to survive and who would help.

My father insisted that I call him Babbo, which in Northern Italian means daddy, and was determined that I speaking only Italian to him. He wouldn't respond to me no matter what I said, if it was in English. Although he understood and spoke English, his relentless resolve forced me to learn to speak his language just to survive important communications. After adolescence I actually began to enjoy, not only the language, but the culture, and especially the music. Family coercion into the study of classical music especially Italian Opera, finally turned the knowledge of Italian into an asset.

When an eye operation, helplessly blinded him with bandages, he somberly announced that only I could read him his daily Italian newspaper. That's when I had to learn to read it. I was in my impressionable early teens and I would do anything to please him. So, we both suffered through my

attempts to read to him. First, came the Italian news. Next, came the literary pieces, then the letters to the editor. My patience frequently blew up but his never faltered. I have no memory of his ever losing his temper with me, except once. I don't recall what I did to provoke him but he was seriously 'going to let me have it'. When he ceremoniously removed his belt to thrash me, his pants fell down, around his hips. It was the first and last time I saw his belt. We both laughed so hard, that from that moment on every time whenever even the possibility of punishment came up, and he put his fingers on his belt, we erupted in uproarious convulsive giggling.

Since television wasn't as compelling an addiction as it is today, people actually talked and amused each other with stories. Everyone in the family had their own style and particular favorites were requested over and over. "Babbo's" merchant marine travel tales took me to many exotic ports of the world; Spain, Greece, France, especially his birthplace, Elba, perhaps, because his longing to go back was so strong. Every time one of his paisani went back home to Elba to retire, it was a great celebration, a "goombah"¹ gathering to wish him well. Babbo would

¹"goombah" is the Americanized slang version of the Italian word "cumpari", meaning something akin to

wistfully dream of the day he earned enough to go back and enjoy the fruits of his years of labor in America. This was the goal of every Italian immigrant I had met. So many necessities and expenditures, especially on me, stood in his way. Babbo never did go back before he died. So I took him in my heart and brought him back with me. On the ferry from Piombino I felt his soul would delight in the adventure we would be taking, privately, spiritually. Tears of his nostalgia overflowed as the ship docked in Elba's sheltered harbor of Portoferraio.

Months before, in preparation, and in grammatically poor Italian, I had contacted by letter, his only living sister. Eda, was thrilled to hear from me. At 75 and paralyzed by hip and back problems, she gave me the address of a first cousin, who would pick me up at the boat. Curiously this cousin and I were named exactly alike, Maria Teresa, in honor of our mutual grandmother. I called when we disembarked and suddenly amid suitcases and bags I realized I didn't know who I was looking for. Anyone could've come up to me and said she was my cousin. I pushed the thought out of my mind and relaxed with an espresso in

grabbed and embraced her.

(...continued)

compatriot.

an outdoor cafe and sat beside my suitcases as a signal to whomever was looking for a traveler, that here I was! The sun set and I waited. Maybe, I worried, she couldn't make it. I decided to go into the nearby hotel and see if they had a room. It was so small that the two Pullman suitcases and I took up all the extra space in the room. Well, in an emergency, for one night, it might have to do, but I thought I'd look outside, just one more time. I had expected the people on this island to look practically like Lilliputians, perhaps because its most famous visitor, Napoleon, was small and almost all my father's friends were under five feet nine inches tall. I decided I wasn't far from wrong as I waited and surveyed the people walking around me.

Soon, as I was staring out at the darkening sea's sunset someone in shadow came walking over to me. It was a slightly built, well dressed woman. Even though we had never met I recognized her immediately. She had my father's eyes in her face, the exact color and shape, and at that moment I felt an almost eerie sense that he truly was with me. She was shy, averted her eyes coyly and smiled, embarrassedly looking down at her expensive shoes. I grabbed and embraced her.

"Maria Teresa?" I asked.

"Maria Teresa?" she asked.

Somehow despite my broken Italian, at some level, our blood communicated. They use a phrase, in Italian, "La voce del sangue" which translates to something like the attraction of the bloodline. There is much to be said for this idea. There was a connection but we had never met. Yet, this real Italian language I heard around me was very different from what I spoke. I nervously uttered short two word questions and declarations and joyfully encouraged by this, she jabbered away, speedily losing my comprehension. After a few seconds of my blank staring, she stopped and I asked her to be patient, "Un momento..." as I whipped out my dictionary. She took it away and said we'd find words to understand. How could I argue? So from then on, I used a dramatic blank stare, and a lot of hand and body movements to communicate. I had a flashback memory of my father using the same technique with Americans. My repertoire was more extended than his, at points of irretrievable incomprehension I followed an eyeroll and a shoulder shrug with an Italian attempt at "what does that mean?" ("Che significa?"), which got me a different version, sometimes a few versions responding with dramatic hand gestures swerving furiously in all directions. I frequently inhibited an innate reaction to duck. Yelling among themselves was

normal also, just an expression of emotion and soon I realized it was part of the whole Italian intimidation system of communication. The one thing I hadn't worried about was the language barrier and ironically, that was the first hurdle I had to climb.

She grabbed my hand, and my suitcases and I was whisked off and squeezed into a small Italian car driven by Maria Teresa's brother in law, Erberto. He was a retired military man and had once had the high responsibility of "Marshall" of the island. I guess that's like a military governor. He stood at an exaggerated erect attention. It was as tall as his five foot four inch frame would allow. Is everyone here this size? It must be in their genes, my genes, I thought. Erberto had lively intelligent eagle gray eyes and judging from his vocabulary, was obviously an educated person who probably knew the island better than almost anyone on it. What a perfect person to guide me around. My cousin took us to her hilltop villa in Capoliveri. It was large, white, terraced and flower filled. It overlooked the expanse of the Mediterranean. Even in October there was summer basil growing in large white baroquely decorative clay pots near the kitchen. The weather was very warm and my autumn clothes were suffocating. They were wearing fall weight clothing and little sweaters and jackets. I was roasting

and my hair was melting. On the very first day I had to give up make up and hair spray. It was useless in the Mediterranean wind, the scorching sun and the biting salt air, my eyes watered and my hair blew ... the rule of the island seemed simple: be uncomplicated, unaltered and often (on the beaches) ... unclothed.

Simple also were the superb wines! There was absolutely no bitterness, and these connoisseurs explained that it was the clear mountain waters and the lack of sulfur in the grapes on this island. Very special even for such a non connoisseur as myself. My cousin, who studied to be a chef in France, prepared extremely simple meals with no frills or elaborate sauces. Some of the food was strange to me; her son Graziano, a young businessman, who runs the resort, was eating freshly caught rabbit from his morning hunt. I politely declined his offer to share it because I had a momentary flash of "rodent family" cross my mind followed by the realization that these people would lick their lips at the Easter bunny himself and forgo the chocolate. There were all sorts of indigenous squid and shellfish which I could neither recognize nor hope to digest. I had no trouble passing the plate. I could learn to be very small and thin here also. Fallacy number one was that I could speak Italian, fallacy number two was that I would enjoy the

Italian food.

We arose early the next day and had a thick black coffee like liquid they called espresso. It slid slowly from one side of the demitasse cup to the other, reluctant to be swallowed. They don't eat breakfast. I was just as glad not to face yet another possible version of fish. We were off to see the sights. When I came down the wide white villa steps from our comfortable suite of rooms, groups of smiling and waving people were gathered around. The whole extended Signorini family was introduced in a reception line and was just waiting for me to join the entourage of cars that was forming for this jaunt. They traveled in convoys! I didn't know any of these people who had been carefully selected, according to blood relation, to accompany us. Erberto drove our car, which was the lead car. My aunt Eda followed in the second car engaging several others with stories of my father and my childhood and the third, contained yet more relatives who were waving in the Italian way, hand in the air over the head and beckoning toward the self, this is opposite to our side to side hand wave. Curious. I lost track of counting cars behind us as my cousin began explaining the sights in her gravel voice. I had to concentrate on the language. As we sped around the curves of the steep mountains I looked back and the cars

were still close and in line, all the way to the first stop. It was the cemetery! We were going to visit the graves of all the other relatives I had missed meeting. I have a particular sensitivity about cemeteries and have never been able to force myself to go but this fact hadn't come up in the conversation and I sensed that this wasn't the moment to share it with them. This was their way, of introducing me to my grandparents and great grandparents and a myriad of others who were distantly related. I wasn't always sure of the deceased's description or the exact connection to my father, but I was too muddled and spooked to keep asking. It was a history lesson in an ancient cemetery overlooking the Mediterranean sea. The large and stony grades and levels we climbed reminded me of an archeological dig in one sense but the artistic arrangement of the graves and vaults amidst statuary and fences and trees and flowers were deliberately and painstakingly placed. Pictures of people were displayed on their headstones and in vaults and along white curving open air corridors of what seemed to be picture galleries of the dead. There were statues and alcoves with Roman style works of art in still others. As fascinating as this all was, the sun was beating down on us and we seemed to be walking farther and farther toward ancient burial places. It felt so much like a desert I was

half expecting to see a pyramid around the next level. I had lost sight of the convoy 20 minutes ago. I didn't think it polite to complain but Erberto read my face (I'm convinced he had some sort of psychic ability, because it had to be more than my inadequate words that he was interpreting) and finally they decided that we'd done enough meeting of the dead relatives. Back to the convoy and everyone waved again. Who were they? We went to a tiny seaside restaurant with only eight tables in it. Just enough. I hadn't really eaten in two days now. What they served was an unrecognizable assortment of "frutte del mar"¹ -more fish! I was related to these people, why hadn't I inherited their love of seafood, like I did the black eyes. I looked around at the group from the convoy hunched over their plates relishing their purple, black and gray shellfish and making consecutive slurping sounds followed by gulps of wine. They ordered several dishes and shared them family style instead of having individual orders. These Italians don't eat pasta at every dinner meal as they did on tours we'd had on the mainland of Italy, and as my father did. They drank lots of wine, ate fish, stayed thin, and grew old. That night the stars were so close I felt I was

¹"frutte del Mar" translates to fruit of the sea.

on one. A strange, yet somehow, familiar one.

The next day I was taken with the now customary, smiling and waving convoy, to whom, today, I decided to blow kisses. They applauded in return! We were going to see where my father had lived. On the way, I was introduced to a ninety five year old lady who said she had known my father. Virginia was still pretty, long wavy white hair arranged on her shoulders, blue eyes, and pink skin. She was excited about him because she said he was so handsome. In a screeching yell, like someone who's hard of hearing, she shouted, "You don't look like him" (she didn't have to rub it in). She also said that she knew a man when she was a kid who knew Napoleon. She said she was going to tell me about it when I came back. In the meantime she asked me to say hello to someone who wanted to see me.

It was Angelo, an Italian I had met while he was working in the states and hadn't seen in twenty years. His hair had turned white and he was wearing eyeglasses that barely shielded his watering eyes. I stood stunned and hardly recognized him until I heard his familiar voice remark in Italian, "You are still beautiful, Maria". His irresistible charm had not changed. It only took minutes to get back the old camaraderie we had known so many years ago

when he looked like and danced like John Travolta. There was a catch, my husband was at my side wondering who this too friendly and borderline fresh guy was. Needless to say he wouldn't leave my side as Angelo and I walked in the gardens and caught up on each other's lives. He had not been happily married after we had parted company and was living alone back in his hometown near his family and old friends. He offered to show us the island but we had to leave in 24 hours and the others were losing patience with all the attention we were giving each other. Life is full of surprises but this encounter was a shock. Pleasant though it was to remember the passionate times of my youth, I never thought I'd see him again. We politely exchanged addresses and parted again, this time, I thought, forever.

I started doing research as soon as I returned home to the States. It was sparked by an Italian book and what I thought was a bookmark given to me as a parting gift by 'Erberto of few words'. On the plane I scanned the book out of boredom. Eleven hours is a long flight but I discovered what I hadn't known about the fascinating story of Napoleon's ten month exile and what it meant to Elba. The book is a diary from a special collection discovered accidentally during the renovation of some old buildings. It now becomes a rare glimpse of the interpretation of a

citizen of 1814, Claudio Campetti, who was among the many conscripted into the army for the endless battles waged by Napoleon. It was an ordinary story but his literacy is interesting though the Italian is antiquated and difficult to translate. Obviously from the corroboration of other historical accounts in my explorations, his point of view was shared by many of the inhabitants of the period. I labored over the translation in my spare time, for months, delighting in my growing confidence and curiosity as time went on. One seemed to feed upon the other. I was spurred on to doing library research about Napoleon. I have to admit that the insane idea that I might have been related, since he was on such a small island for almost a year, did occur to me. It is of course implausible but not impossible. I was impelled to know more about him. After I had exhausted what our own Indiana University could supply, I went to every library within driving distance: to Chicago's famous Newberry Library; University of Chicago; to Michigan State; and of course Notre Dame. My obsession grew with each new book I found. I read everything I could. Was I trying to find out if he had affairs on the island with one of my ancestors? There is something about the wide jaw, the cheekbones and forehead that remind me of my father, and Angelo. This must be my own mild form of insanity. It's

not a problem, it makes life very interesting. Yet on went the irresistible urge to know Napoleon. The more I learned about him, the more I fell in love with him. He was strong, handsome, intelligent and wise. I was developing a bias, but all the accounts of his life, from the people who loved or hated him were biased also. I read very little about Napoleon that wasn't passionate. He was passionate. He had to be to accomplish the unification of Europe by conquest.

What I had thought was only a souvenir fabric bookmark in the Campetti book, I recognized, from my readings, to be a replica of the flag that Napoleon designed while his ship *The Undaunted*¹, was standing in the harbor waiting to be "welcomed" onto his new kingdom on the first day of the exile on Elba. The bookmark is a 12 inch ribbon made of a dual red and white stripe with three yellow bees on it. Erberto didn't tell me what this gift was, or, maybe, he tried and I didn't understand. I discovered its significance months later from a description I read in the journal of Sir Neil Campbell, the English representative who accompanied Napoleon on Elba for the purpose of watching his every move. "The flag is white with a diagonal red stripe , decorated with three bees on the stripe ... and the bees

Journal of Sir Neil Campbell, From April 2, 1814 to April 6, 1815, p.216

¹The English provided the ships for transportation and escort to Elba.

formed part of his own arms as Emperor of France." ¹ When I read that I jumped up and tore through all my boxed souvenirs of the Elba trip and that's when the scrutiny for the understated significance of Elba began. Besides being addicted to researching all the libraries in the midwest, I was infatuated

Napoleon's relatively brief exile on Elba brought the tiny island to larger world attention. The victor over most of the nations of Europe served to unite many kingdoms under one government and in the process was the communication catalyst for their subsequent interaction. There have been literally thousands of books written about Napoleon in French, German, Italian, English and other languages. I don't presume to be an expert because all that is left to know is what another has written. From my fascinating two years of research it is obvious that no one who wrote about Napoleon was completely objective. Everyone has their point of view and can document their opinion with some type of evidence. Primary source evidence ranges from excerpts of the diary of his valet at the French court, Louis Constant Meiry¹, who was angry with getting caught at making a secret

¹ Louis Constant Meiry, 1788-1845, *Mémoires de Constant premier valet de chambre de l'empereur* and *Journal of Sir Neil Campbell, From April 9, 1814 to April 1, 1815*, p 216. *Mémoires* with detail of his private life, family and court. 4 vol., English translation (London: R. S. Nichols, 1899). Very subjective account given from the perspective of the man who despised him when he abdicated. (continued...)

Napoleone at Elba

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¹ Louis Constant Wairy, 1778-1845, *Maemoires de Constant, premier valet de chambre de l'empereur sur la vie privae de Napolaeon, sa fanill'e et sa cour: Diary of the head valet of Napoleon with detail of his private life, family and court.* 4 vol., English translation (London: H. S. Nichols, 1896). Very subjective account given from the perspective of the man who deserted him when he abdicated. Even though he was paid in
(continued...)

side business of getting favors from, and audiences with, the emperor, to his biographer on St. Helena, Las Cases, to whom Napoleon dictated his final memoirs. The Comte de Las Cases was obviously sympathetic to the enthralling words of a leader whose influence he recognized had changed the course of history.¹ (See photo on horseback)

Napoleon's commanders couldn't get the troops to fight after the cold hungry defeat at Moscow. When forced to recognize for the first time that his armies could no longer maintain their position and that a massive loss of lives was inevitable, he sent emissaries to negotiate a resolution in Paris. This conciliatory act prevented his own execution and the massacre of the lives of the remaining soldiers. The men who were in power, for the moment, decided that the exile of Napoleon was the most humane alternative.²

On April 6, 1814, Napoleon was informed of his fate, the same day that the Senate passed a new charter returning power to the House of Bourbon and their descendants. From

(...continued)

advance to join Napoleon on Elba, he just never showed up.. Although he protested that he never took bribes to get an audience with the emperor, his loyalty faltered when Napoleon's position could no longer achieve the monetary return to which he was accustomed.

¹Las Cases, Emmanuel-Auguste-Dieudonne, comte de, 1766-1848, *Memoirs of the late and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, (N.Y: Peter Eckler, 1836. 1935) 4 vol., Diary of the nobleman who was a personal aide to Napoleon and accompanied him to his final exile on St. Helena. He began the diary on June 20, 1815.

²Ibid. p92

— *isola d'elba* —



Napoleon as Warrior

This number is an account of the many battles that have provided a dramatic history of the French Revolution. The following elements of the presentation of these facts from the French Revolution and the number is the selection of the most important events. They only Napoleon after the battle of Austerlitz, the most important part of the war was the part in the action, which is presented between the French and the British.

this weakened position he was compelled to accept the terms of the Treaty of Fontainebleau. This was the legal document agreed to by all the allied countries involved with the overthrow of the emperor. It included the terms of his exile to the island of Elba, which is where Napoleon chose to be sent. He agreed to a pension of about 100,000 francs annually¹, out of which he was to pay for his living expenses. The living expenditures of a reigning sovereign included maintaining an army of 600 men for defense of the island, his court, everyone's living quarters, as well as the feeding and support of many employed on the island, etc. This treaty was momentous especially because if actions speak louder than words, the Allies led by Napoleon's enemies probably never intended to honor the terms of the treaty. They just wanted to corral Napoleon's forces and contain him in a place where he could be kept in check. On the other hand, Napoleon may have been deluding his captors in accepting the exile. In Campetti's Italian Journal of 1814, there is a passage which describes Napoleon's initial public speech to his new subjects at his arrival on Elba. He promises that although he knew that they didn't love him

¹This number is as accurate as the many books that have recorded it throughout history allow. There are the confusing elements of the translations of these facts from the French language and differences in the valuation of monies then and now. There may have been other money conditions agreed to but the important part is that none was ever paid so the actual amount promised becomes insignificant.

now, he guaranteed that they would change their opinions before he left.¹ If this account of the event is accurate, it documents Napoleon's reciprocal insincerity about agreeing to stay permanently in exile. This information transforms the trip to Elba from the acceptance of defeat and retirement into a temporary retreat to regroup forces. This manipulating war strategy in order to bide his time is unmistakably recorded by Elban citizen, Campetti. It presents looming evidence for the fact that this ruler of the whole of Europe could not be completely isolated on this small but centrally situated island for the remainder of his life, which might have been more than thirty years.

Many individuals who had a complaint about the regime of nearly 20 years joined together to depose the forceful emperor. These coordinated forces seized Napoleon's first comprehensive military weakness to defeat his ultimate power, and set up a provisional government to restore the legitimite Bourbon king of France, Louis XVIII. At the Congress of Vienna, the leaders of the European world at that time led by Britain, French royalists, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, decided the fate of the beaten world conqueror.

¹Campetti, Claudio, *Bonaparte, All'Isola D'Elba nell 1814*, (Lucca Press, Benedine e Roche, no date). "p 20, "So che gli Abitanti del mio nuovo Governo non me amano molto; ma io faro in modo che alla mia partenza abbiano cambiato opinione in mio vantaggio."

Talleyrand, a miffed French minister who was formerly in his employ, was determined to overthrow the Bonaparte dynasty. Napoleon had publicly called him "a piece of dung in a silk stocking" and this was a supreme revenge of which he was taking advantage when the opportunity of downfall arose.¹ Metternich, the Austrian ambassador, opposed an exile on Elba predicting that it would mean a resumption of war within two years.² He thereby accurately forecast that Napoleon could escape from Elba, but perhaps because compromise is the root of all agreements, and holding him down was most important of all, he relented. Many men were still faithful in Napoleon's army, which allowed him to hold on to a limited type of strength. He had to be forced to officially abdicate and accept exile in the first place to stop the men from fighting. Napoleon chose Elba for exile because of its vicinity to the isle of his birth, Corsica, and its placement in the center of the sea between France and Italy. From there he could communicate with friends from both areas easily, by boat messenger. The chief port, Portoferraio, is ideal for its natural fort-like barrier reef in addition to the extra fortifications made by the

¹Harold Nicolson, *The Congress of Vienna, A Study in Allied Unity, 1812-1822*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1946), p85

²*Ibid.*, p 95.

Romans in their era and added to by Cosimo Di Medici in the 15th century, to forestall the constantly marauding pirates. This natural security makes it difficult for anyone to approach the island unseen. Guards posted in towers around the island could see ships coming from anywhere. The threats of Napoleon's assassination were thereby abated.

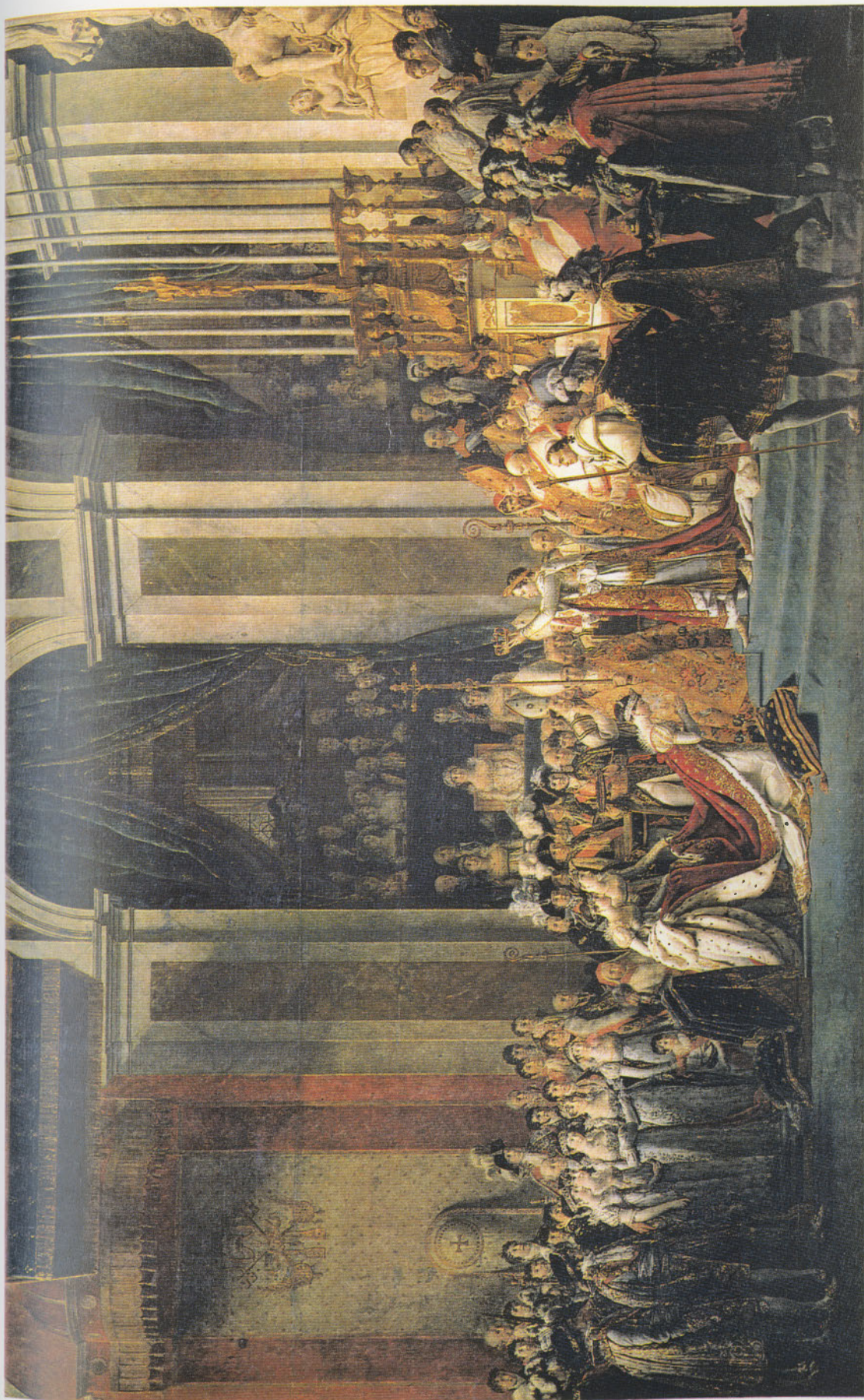
Neil Campbell remained on Elba on orders from the British Cabinet but he had no power or means to interfere with Napoleon who by treaty was the independent sovereign. Yet his presence guarded Napoleon's behavior with the threat of his potential to get assistance. Clever at human nature and the psychology of political situations, Napoleon, instead of treating him as a spy, took him openheartedly into his court and showed him he had nothing to hide!

The experiences of the man who had been the emperor of most of Europe resulted in a mindset that influenced the rulership of the small sovereignty of Elba. The same military acumen which brought him to the attention of the leaders of the French Revolution was stifled on Elba. This combination of skill, genius and artistry which promoted Napoleon to brigadier general at the age of 24 was frustrated with minor projects on this tiny rock of an island in the sea. The same general who had his soldiers shoot into an insurgent mob in Paris during the Revolution

was now backing up his orders with small squads to control the lack of hygiene in Portoferraio, where the provincials threw garbage out their windows. His ability to think fast and take command was now in the service of peasants who were as uncooperative as they were overtaxed and conscripted into fighting his foreign wars.

As emperor of the French, (see photo of self crowning) Napoleon had accomplished the consolidation and institutionalization of many reforms of the French Revolution. Even his enemies agreed that he was one of the greatest military commanders of all time. He also did much to modernize the nations he ruled and he followed the same pattern when he arrived on Elba. Elba, however, had known many conquests and the defeated world ruler who arrived on the island met with delays and incompetence. He was accustomed to transforming that with which he came into contact. The uneducated islanders resisted his efforts to introduce changes. Napoleonic rule as developed in France influenced the way he ruled Elba but everywhere he turned he hit a wall of delays. There were miscommunications, lack of resources and equipment to thwart each project. Elbans do not say no, they just don't take orders.

As first consul, he had dictatorial powers just as he



Napoleon as Emperor

did isolated in the Mediterranean. The painting by Louis David depicting Napoleon crowning himself emperor, is who he really was under the temporary mask of obeisance now worn by the ruler of Elba in 1814. Despite the fact that Napoleon eventually made an ally of Neil Campbell, his English jailer reported back regularly about the improvements or changes he made on the island. Campbell left out few details including any and all visitors. Napoleon was always aware that he was being watched. He could never let down his guard, even for a moment, neither as ruler of France nor as ruler of Elba.

Napoleon's many wars before he was exiled, accumulated much wealth for France and the relatives he set up as royalty in the various strategically located places throughout Europe. These contacts became a network of spies while he was on Elba. The island was full of people because he was news and everyone wanted to know the latest. He also had to keep in touch with all his territories to know when and how to make his next move. The stream of visitors mingled the spies with family letters and messages and could be exchanged easily even in front of the English watchdog.

Napoleon set sail for Elba on *H.M.S. Undaunted* on April 28 and landed at Portoferraio on May 5, 1814. He sent envoys to the island to inform them of his arrival. This timing

was not perfect. The Elbans were in the process of rebelling against France for its merciless taxation. They weren't very happy to receive any French sovereign and burning his image in effigy had been reported in some parts. However, the clever Sous Prefect, Louis Balbiani, realized that this little visitor was going to line their pockets and give them a place in history. A well worded proclamation promoting his arrival was posted for the people of Portferraio.

*A most propitious event which will add luster to the history of the Isle of Elba has occurred this day! Our august sovereign, the Emperor Napoleon has come to reside among us. Our greatest hopes have been realized: the welfare and happiness of the island of Elba are ensured."*¹

It was signed by the governor, Balbiani. There was no negativity nor mention of defeat or the situation of exile surrounding their new sovereign. Was this a grand gesture of largesse or far sightedness? It is very Italian to overlook an obvious failing until certain the situation is

¹Christophe, Robert, *Napoleon On Elba*, Translated from the French by Len Ortzen, (London: MacDonald, 1964). p30.

hopeless. The much conquered Elbans waited to see.

For 13 years the inhabitants had enjoyed the benefits of the Civil Code and the boost it gave to prosperity. This was the fact that was accentuated in spreading the welcoming news among the 3000 inhabitants. A pieced together welcome was quickly organized, complete with garlands of the flowers that are abundant on Elba to decorate the buildings and piazzas. His first night's unexpected accommodations were in an office area near the harbor in Portoferraio where he disembarked. Things were hurriedly cleared away for him, yet garbage and worse smells wafted up to his quarters so he became motivated to begin building municipal latrines in every town. Work began immediately¹.

The island of Elba benefited from the genius of his administrative abilities and the many projects he began there. On the first day Napoleon got up at dawn and inspected all the main parts of the island to survey his new domain. Overlooking the main harbor, from the top ridge of Portoferraio, Napoleon exclaimed "*My island is very small.*" This is an often recorded statement documented in the journal of Neil Campbell. Nevertheless, as with every kingdom he encountered and not one to lay idle, he had

¹*Ibid.*, p 83-88.

improvements to make here¹. (See photos of *I Mulini* and *San Martino* homes)

He restored a couple of old windmills "*I Mulini*" in the hope that his wife, Marie Louise, would join him and it came to be known as his town residence. An architect named Bargigli was hired to add another floor to accommodate his wife and son. He stood amid the dust and heat and pointed to which would be his wife's room and which would be his son's. Anxious to escape his temporary quarters in the town hall that was too close to the public offices, he supervised the work himself. He even drank with the men who painted, decorated and arranged the furniture which was confiscated from his sister in Italy. Marie Louise was apparently expected and the renovations included her accommodations on a specially built floor at *I Mulini*. Her Austrian father, Emperor Francis I, was instrumental in diverting his daughter's voyage and keeping her boy away from Elba. Metternich, it was said, employed a young, handsome officer, Count Neipperg, who was a known philanderer, to make a deliberate effort to make the young woman, his mistress.² Napoleon never saw his wife or son after he sailed for Elba.

¹*Ibid.*, p 92-94; *Journal of Sir Neil Campbell*, p 215-230.

²Browning, Oscar, *The Fall of Napoleon*, Chapter XII.



I Mulini



Napoleon's Homes Portoferraio

isola d'elba



San Martino

She was immature and obeyed her father whether he was ordering her to marry him, or not join him on Elba. She abandoned Napoleon along with all the other insincere associates who used him for his power and connections. The now famous doves painted on *I Mulini's* sky blue ceiling carrying the golden ribbon between them in their beaks, symbolizing the faithfulness in marriage was ironic because his wife, Marie Louise's fidelity was very much in question. How could Napoleon with all his spies worldwide not have known? He had to ignore it purposely because this marriage was a business liaison with her father's money and power. The fact remains that Marie Louise and his son never joined him in exile. This cultural tradition of marriage and business arrangement is still prevalent on Elba, as I observed. Marriage is seldom simply for romantic love. They build families, and lives upon these families. There is nowhere to hide on this small place. One conforms to tradition or leaves. Many leave.

Spartan as always in his own circle of life, Napoleon also redid the country house at San Martino, at minimum cost. The house is six kilometers from the city of Portoferraio. Even though the rooftop garden is beautifully landscaped, it overlooks the sea in a lonely way, especially when there is a mist. Today the rooms are in a cold museum

order. Whether or not the furnishings are authentic isn't important, the museum curator said, when I asked whether the rooms were furnished as they were in the days of Napoleon. All was confiscated by the dukes of Tuscany when he left. This is hardly surprising. We have very little that actually survives time as it was originally. This becomes very clear in Italy. There are so many monuments to the past because it has so much history. For example in Florence at the Uffizi, the building that houses some of the world's greatest art, I mused on the statues of Dante and Machiavelli and Giotto on the outside. How could they know from a time before likenesses could be duplicated, what these people actually looked like? These, then, are icons only to the memory of their talent which is fervently revered. In the same way, what remains of Napoleon on Elba may be the places he actually stayed but the contents are long gone. There is a sense of an empty spirit there that is hard to describe in words. It is as if his alienation haunts it still.

Busy in spurts of activity which probably matched his bouts with depression over losing control of the world, Napoleon's projects on Elba demonstrated his zeal for administration. He planned to improve life on the island. He gave his attention to customs and taxes, improving the

hospitals, clearing forests, distribution of land, the salt marshes, the vineyards, the introduction of the silk worm industry, public amusements, public sanitation and the building of roads. The much needed revamping of sanitation standards included stopping the inhabitants from throwing garbage into the street. He cleaned up the streets and planted flowers in piazzas and fixed roads. The roads he built are still in use today. The roads from the town of Portoferraio to Porto Azzuro, which was then called Porto Longone, were hardly mule tracks before he arrived. The carriages and horses he brought along were very out of place here. Although the main purpose of his road building skills had evolved from his need to move men and weapons in military situations, he himself needed to get around on Elba and had to have the necessary roads engineered. A month after his arrival twenty five men were detailed to work on the main road from Portoferraio. His orders were to map out the Marina di Campo so that his carriage could manage it in 48 hours. Perhaps if he had stayed longer today's tourists would have better roads especially in the dangerous mountain passes where compact cars can hardly navigate.

Noticing that chestnuts grew on the slopes of Marciana on one of his investigative tours, he had more imported from Corsica and planted. He also planted mulberry bushes along

the roadside which he brought from Tuscany. Acorns were carried there from the Black Forest and potatoes from France were first cultivated on the island by Napoleon. He called them "*Parmentieres*"

He was interested in iron ore mining in Rio Marina because it was the best money making industry on the island, known since the Romans used this same iron to armor their ships for battle. Tuna fishing was only second in profitability to it in spite of the fact that this was a sea faring race who lived from the fruit of the sea. After acquainting himself with all the people in charge of the important money making activities he was in a position to discover how best to influence his surroundings. Pons de L'Herault was the manager of the mines in Rio Marina and not in the least intimidated by the great emperor. He antagonistically refused to turn over the profits of the mines when asked by Napoleon. France had not paid Napoleon the pension they promised in the Treaty, and Napoleon went to Pons to try and usurp funds to maintain his army and court but he found a stubborn man who stood firm on sending the agreed to profits to the king of France. Pons wrote his

memoirs¹ and described his initial reluctance to take orders but a change of attitude occurred as time and respect grew between the men. Nevertheless money from the ore was not forthcoming and Napoleon had to find other ways of taking care of his massive responsibilities. He was obligated to take care of many individuals in his army and government and those in his household also relied on him for income. He was worried about the lack of funds to maintain his enormous household which included his best friends and most loyal servants who all came to keep him company.

The household at Elba also included Bertrand, the grand marshal of the palace; Druot his life long friend and the military governor; and Peyrusse, the treasurer. From the citizens of Elba he appointed four chamberlains: Doctor Lapi, Signor Traditi (the mayor of Portoferraio) who welcomed him originally, Signor Cantini and the one eyed mayor of Rio Montagna. He also used the services of two secretaries, a doctor, a chemist, a butler, a chef (Ferdinand and seven assistants); two valets, three chasseurs, the mamaluke Ali, eight footmen; two ushers; a wash woman; a gardener; a music director and two female

¹Pons del'Herault, Andre: *Souvenirs et Anecdotes de l'Île d'Elbe*, edited by L-G Pelissier, 1897; Christophe, *Napoleon on Elba*, p67-81.

singers. He had a small navy and army to protect the island. In all some 800 islanders were given work..¹

The projects which occupied the emperor's mind also distracted his loneliness. Soon his mother, Letitcia, always his ally, was on her way to stay with him. She was later joined by his sister, Pauline. The beauty of Pauline, whose nude statue still stands in the garden at San Martino may no longer vie with our present day thin muscular standards. Yet on Elba, in 1814, when she came to comfort her brother, she added gaiety to the island's somber business of survival and many of the lonely officers of the Imperial Guard were said to be in love with her. Although already ill with some leg ailment when she arrived and often carried in a sedan chair, it didn't stop her from dancing. She organized receptions and balls and even began a theater in the unused church of San Francesco, which livened the atmosphere. Actors from Livorno on mainland Italy were invited. On his birthday, Napoleon ordered horses and jockeys brought from Italy for entertainment, but few of the thrifty townspeople appreciated the increasing costs of

¹Nicolson, *Congress of Vienna*, p221

these spectacles and attendance dropped off.¹

In the first few months, Napoleon tried to treat the court of Elba as he did in France, at the Tuilleries. He invited the leading citizens of Elba, the notaries, the apothecaries, the managers of tunny fishing and the mines, outfitted in befitting uniforms, to court ceremonies. Even though the ladies were dressed in fine gowns, the manners of uneducated, unkempt island women would cause them to either gape in silence or giggle with nervousness in the court circle and with Napoleon as he made his rounds to speak to each one in Italian. Soon he tired of their loutish unsophisticated and provincial manners² and limited his circle. Though almost 200 years have passed, the islanders are still unpolished, superstitious and occasionally uncouth. Their table manners are different from ours in the way they hold their utensils to the way they hunch over their food and shovel it in without looking up, or pausing, or talking. The standards today are practically unchanged in this solitary place. They have strict norms of behavior and any challenge to a man or woman's honor would result in immediate condemning gossip and social ostracization and challenge.

¹Vernon Bartlett, *A Book About Elba*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1965)

²Nicolson, *Congress of Vienna*, p221

This is the parochial environment in which Napoleon found himself. The people were disconnected from mainland Italians yet the anomaly of being subjected to constantly changing conquerors and their strange ways of doing things has left its mark of resilient rebellion which stays moody and unsatisfied and seeks its own isolation. The provincial nature of the more gruff islanders and their pervading standards of propriety might have bored the worldly emperor into greater depression and seclusion. For example, in the year 1814, DeBerneaud wrote of the Elbans "Licentiousness is at all times an indelible stain on the female"¹. These words explain why Napoleon had to hide his mistress, Marie Walewska and her son, during her three day visit on the island. Her quiet disembarkment on the Marciana side of the island must have been an attempt to sneak in. The woman and what might have been Napoleon's illegitimate child had been noticed, however, and the word got out that his wife, the Empress Marie Louise and her son had arrived. Preparations for the empress had already begun when Walewska was surreptitiously swept away on a boat from another little known part of the island. The prevalent easy virtue of Paris and other parts of his kingdom were not acceptable

¹De Berneaud, Arsenne Thiebaut, *A Voyage to the Island of Elba*, translated by Jerdan, (London: Longman, 1815). This describes the ancient history of Elba from the time of the Etruscans to 1814, the year of Napoleon's stay. Detail on minerals, plant life and geography.

here, and especially as a leader, he had to set an example. After a while, he was said to have preferred to play cards with his mother, over grand balls and the lack of the island's scintillating topical conversation. Added to the default of payments from France on the Treaty of Fontainebleau, and the refusal of Pons D'L'Hereault to assist with this lack from the profits of the iron mine funds, threats of kidnapping and assassination were adding up more reasons to escape¹.

The spirit of the "Man of Destiny" was stifled and he felt the imprisonment of distance. The same genius who had begun the cult of his own legend during his lifetime was bored by Elba. He had begun to cultivate the systematic publicizing of his victories during his first Italian campaign. Later as first consul and emperor, he had engaged the best writers and artists of France and Europe to glorify his deeds and had contributed to the cult himself by the elaborate ceremonies with which he celebrated his rule. He maintained that he had preserved the achievements of the Revolution in France and offered their benefits to Europe. These were his thoughts as he made the best of his situation on Elba. This is why he could not accept retirement and

¹Christophe, *Napoleon on Elba*, Chapter 7.

permanent exile. It would mean defeat not only in his lifetime but throughout the history he knew he was writing as he lived.

Napoleon was a driven man, never secure, never satisfied. "Power is my mistress," he said. His life was work-centered; even his social activities had a purpose. He could only bear amusements or vacations briefly. During the time he spent on Elba, the lack of certain foods and other luxuries might have added to his suffering yet his taste actually preferred coarse food, bad wine, and cheap snuff. He could be hypnotically charming, for a purpose, but he discovered that the people of Elba did not fit in with his plans so he ignored them. He had intense loyalties to his family and old associates. Nothing and no one, however, was allowed to interfere with his work, he knew it was a legacy.

Napoleon was sometimes a tyrant and always an authoritarian, but one who believed in ruling by mandate of the people, expressed in plebiscites. He was also a great enlightened monarch—a civil executive of enormous capacity who changed French institutions and tried to reform the institutions of Europe and give the Continent a common law. Few deny that he was a military genius. At St. Helena, he said, "Waterloo will erase the memory of all my victories."

He was wrong; for better or worse, he is best remembered as a general, not for his enlightened government, but the latter must be understood for one to appreciate the tremendous effect he had on civilization.

Perhaps nowhere is this effect more pronounced or more underestimated than on the tiny island of Elba. As an outsider, looking in, many of the inhabitants look like little replicas of him compared to the death mask image which I photographed on my second visit and the paintings by Jacques Louis David. The Elban people share the same short muscular stature, the wide cheekbones, the aquiline nose and especially, the emotional sense of government involvement of citizens at the community level. Everyone has an opinion on what the representatives are culminating in their political meetings on Elba. Many meetings take place informally in the street, on Sunday mornings, while the women go to church.

Elba was forever changed by the short visit of Napoleon. Europeans began visiting and writing about it right away. He had many visitors during his stay and others came later to see the changes he made. Even though the history of the island had been linked to its mineral resources since the Etruscans, Elba's archeological digs

were actually started during the reign of Napoleon, and illuminated much about how civilization lived thousands of years ago. These important studies unearthed artifacts from caves, dating as far back as prehistoric eras, which were catalogued and later displayed in museums.

Napoleon's prison island interested the powerful of Europe from era to era and they left behind numerous vestiges of their temporary domination. Indelible signs still remain as in the island of Pianosa (see photo) in which the governor of the prison resided and which still maintains the architecture left by its medieval conquerors. Yet the history of Elba is more than Napoleon.¹

¹Christophe, *Napoleon on Elba*, provides the best account of Napoleon's ten months on Elba.



Pianosa
Prison Island

Consideration of Elba's Past

Although Elba had a long history before Napoleon, not much can be actually documented about it. Excavations point to the Etruscans as the earliest settlers on Elba however, Etruscan history from the 8th century BC, can be difficult to trace. Most existent documents recording Etruscan history and life were written by their enemies and neighbors. Undeciphered writings are found on tomb walls and inscribed in pottery so that few facts are known. What Etruscan texts exist are untranslated; the language remains a mystery. The political history is slightly clearer; we know that Romans adopted much from the Etruscan system, and the visual archaeological evidence provides more of a clue¹.

Concepts of female beauty, fashion and jewelry of the Etruscan and Roman world are depicted on tombs and frescoes, especially on the mainland at Tarquinia. The Etruscan woman who was on Elba was famous in the ancient world, not only for her beauty, but the amount of freedom she enjoyed².

¹Helpful and interesting further reading includes Michael Grant, *The Etruscans*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980 and Otto Wilhelm von Vacano, *The Etruscans in the Ancient World*, St. Martin's Press, 1960.

²Oral tradition on Elba is supported by scholars. The freedom of Etruscan women is called prostitution to

(continued...)

According to ancient Greek texts, it was a custom accepted by Etruscan society to take lovers before submitting to the ceremony of marriage. This practice allowed them to probe the limits of their expertise to please men, and made them more desirable and fascinating as lovers. They participated in the grand feasts, along with their male counterparts, as shown in the magnificent frescoes of the Tarquinian Tombs and the lids of the sarcophagi. They are always shown exquisitely clothed, made up and covered in jewelry.

The few artifacts left behind on Elba, are but a portion of the whole. The Etruscans were a central Italy tribe so that most of their traces do remain on the mainland. The Etruscans' demise may be partly attributed to their ephemeral attitude towards life on this earth, which led them to build their homes of temporary substances such as wood and clay instead of stone. In direct contrast, their tombs were built to last forever. A trip through Etruria is said to be one of the many interesting archeological excursions you can take in Italy. Etruscans' remains of their civilization are located at Populonia, on the mainland, near Piombino which like Elba, is remembered

²(...continued)

"amass a dowry" before marriage by Plautus in his *Cistellaria*, as quoted by Raymond Block, *The Etruscans*, (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958) p 128.

for its iron and minerals. Distinguished for their seamanship the Etruscans formed alliances with the seafaring Phoenician colony of Carthage.

The expansion of the Etruscans was kept in check by the Greeks in the Southern cities of Italy and Sicily in the 5th Century battles. As Etruscans were wealthy contributors they were absorbed into the Roman culture rather than conquered. Even after the Etruscan culture disappeared, its influence can be seen in many areas of the Roman culture and often mistaken for Roman origin. The She-Wolf symbol of the city of Rome is Etruscan, as is the origination of the gladiatorial games, which are always credited to the Romans. The skills they had in architecture and engineering was evidenced by their bridges, canals, temples and roads. Luxury items were used for funerals and religious ceremonies. Gold jewelry involving 18k gold balls are still used. I was given just such a replica by my aunt.

The Romans who came to Elba used the iron from the mines at Rio Marina for warships. They didn't stay long. They came, they conquered, took what they wanted and moved on. The Romans had other territories full of riches to vanquish. There is very little history of the Romans on Elba except for their extrication of iron from the mines.

Elba was simply a working outpost which was used for its resources and left to its own fate and the next conqueror who wanted what it had to offer. Rio Marina (see photo) is the precise spot where the Romans mined the iron for their war fleet. Its easy access was right on the sea which expedited the transportation of the product to waiting carriers.

There are Roman ruins of a villa which was overlooking the harbor of Portoferraio which we walked through. (see photo of Roman Ruins.) The ruins of the Villa Romana delle Grotte show various rooms made of stone with round porticos for windows. The small size of the doorways tells us how very small statured these residents must have been. An aqueduct for water transference and a cistern are clearly visible and remain as a monument to their advanced civilization. The map in the photo gives the layout of the entire complex structure.

Also still visible in the main port of Portoferraio, is the crumbling additional stone wall fortification built by Cosimo D'Medici. In 1548, the wealthy banking family from Florence provided the funds for the building of this added protection from the raiding pirates. In gratitude, temporarily, at least, the Elbans named their main port of



ISOLA D'ELBA

Mauro Balletti

Roman Ruins at
Villa delle Grotte

Rio Marina port



I.L.V.A.
Abandoned Iron Mine



Roman Ruins at Villa delle Grotte



Portoferraio "Cosmopolis" after this generous and rich benefactor. Patrons of the Renaissance were thereby involved in the history of Elba's survival¹.

The pirates' reign lasted about two hundred years from the 15th to the 17th century. It was a common occupation from the 15th century for Islamic renegades to comb the Mediterranean seas in search of booty. Pirating began from time of the first sea faring people, the Phoenicians, and Elba was in the spotlight, geographically right between the Italian mainland and the islands of Corsica and Sardinia. A Christian-Muslim conflict spawned one of the most successful pirates, Barbarossa, or Redbeard, as he was called. His real name was Kair Ed Din². In 1534, Admiral Barbarossa sacked all the towns along the coasts of Elba and took many prisoners while in the employ of the Turkish sultan Sulimano II. The powerful sultan ruled the ravished seas from the Turkish Algerian Barbary coast, which was then part of the Ottoman empire. As leader of the corsairs, Barbarossa was one of the most notable threats to assault the seas and conquer for Turkey that which might otherwise fall to Christian Spain. In the 16th Century European shipping was

¹Vanagolli, Gianfranco, *Turchi E Barbareschi All'Elba Nel Cinquecento*, Le Opere e i Giorni, Roma, Stampa Centro Graphico, Portoferraio, 1994. Pirates invaded Elba in the 15th century.

²Ibid. P 15

overtaken and pirating was a chief source of revenue for the local rulers. It also became way to make a living for island people including Elbans. Boys were warned to beware of being abducted out to sea to become indentured servants of their captors even into the 20th century.

Indiscriminate raids disrupted trade and prevented commercial growth. Yet, it did foster insurance and partnerships, to divide the risk. Privateering (small business owners?) developed whereby the government commissioned ships to make reprisal raids to recoup losses. They often provided protection from pirates. Privately owned vessels operated on a pay as you go basis and were often tempted into piracy themselves. This corruption occurred not only as a result of need but also because it was easy to use their privateer licenses to mask illegalities. They could also be used to destroy the trade of a potential enemy. No world leader could have ignored this blight on commercial trade and the resulting costs to investors. Napoleon might have had a real understanding of pirate methods since he was born on Corsica in the middle of the Mediterranean, right beside Elba. How could he have been raised so near this sea and not seen pirates loading and unloading booty? He could have met them in the taverns on shore, or even had several in his own family? This is

conceivable conjecture but the romantic stories of pirates are as common on Elba as Walt Disney is in America.

Today there is an unused mine at Barbarossa Beach, (see photo of Barbarossa Beach) named after the infamous redbear pirate of the 16th century. Here is where his pirates came ashore to get water, or slaves, or bury loot. The sand has black sections from the iron content. We climbed on a winding narrow foot path around hills embedded with minerals of all kinds especially marcasite. One old collapsing mine still had a sign in front of it with "Ilva" at the top, and I remembered reading that this was the name the Romans called the island of Elba. A small man-made pond is encased within the bay. The sea is everywhere. I wondered if Barbarossa had left any undiscovered treasures buried beneath us in some cave we couldn't see. The camping sites that were situated so close are better located for seascapes than some hotels.

There are whole towns like Rio nel'Elba (see photo) which were built to escape pirate raids and are still standing on the spots which they were built hundreds of years ago. They are in constant disrepair and costly to maintain. (see photos of high mountain top villages) Villages built to escape mauraders although picturesque are



**Barbarossa
Beach**



Minerals in Rock





Rio Nell'Elba
Built high to escape Mauraders



Villages built away from Pirates



still today difficult to access even by little compact cars. Yet given their location it is a wonder they are reachable at all.

Elba has been at the center of battles between many masters who conquered them. The governing class has included the French, the Germans, the Spanish and too many to list in two thousand years. The Spanish constructed defensive positions in Fort San Giacomo which today is a penal institution whose size dominates the town of Porto Azzuro. Although their power was temporary the prison still stands in memory of their era. This is now a prison. These and other reminders of the many conquerors of Elba still remain. The final conquerors of Elba were the Germans in World War II. They occupied the island in the Mediterranean and by returning year after year have become the backbone of today's tourism.

contrast against the green and black of the majestic Monte Capanne mountain group which appear placed in the breathtaking backdrop of the gleaming azure colored Mediterranean Sea. It is not surprising that its world famous beauty has touched the many curious visitors to return again and again. Tourism is perhaps its only economic asset since the mines were closed in the 40s.

The soil is rich and contains about 150 different minerals.

The New Conquerors

Elba's geographical location as an island in the Mediterranean and the rich deposits of iron and minerals has determined its history for centuries.

After sailing west for an hour on a large commuter ferry, from the port of Piombino, on the mainland of Italy, in the turquoise expanse of the Mediterranean, Elba, a large rock shaped island comes into view. If there is fog Elba looks like a lonely cast away about 6 miles from the main continent even though it is the third largest island of Italy. The extremely mild climate varies along the coast which has been developed for about 147 kilometers (about 91 miles). Waves breaking on the sparkling white beaches contrast against the green and black of the majestic Monte Capanne mountain group which appear placed in the breathtaking backdrop of the gleaming azure colored Mediterranean Sea. It is not surprising that its world famous beauty has touched the many curious visitors to return again and again. Tourism is perhaps its only economic asset since the mines were closed in the 40s.

The soil is rich and contains about 150 different minerals.

There are deposits of garnet, beryl, marcasite, tourmaline, cassiterite, pollucite, foresite and others that have geological significance. To inexperienced eyes some iron pyrites differ from gold only in value. Under the sea, the crystals appear like enchanted topazes, emeralds, rubies, diamonds and amethysts, aquamarines and sapphires shimmering together. The red holes in the landscape at Rio Marina from the iron mines of antiquity are on the surface of the mountain in different hues of red, yellow, blue and green and can be seen to mark the landscape from the view on the opposing hills.

Elba is about seventeen miles from east to west, and about six miles north to south. A variety of deeply indented bays alternate with rocky cliffs along its coastline. Much of the island is over 500 feet above sea level and you can climb from a beach flanked by cactus figs (Indian figs) to a mountain which grows cyclamen and other varieties which grow in the altitude of the Alps. Evergreens in Tuscany as well as here, are a spindly light green non prickly type. These Tuscan trees stand apart as they have a sparse bottom and a typical spare branched pyramidal shape.

Beauty and climate have attracted the new conquerors, the

tourists. Travelers mostly from Germany and Europe return annually to relax and enjoy the beauty of nature, yacht, and swim in the clear sea. The guidebooks don't have to exaggerate. Elbans enjoy a sunny climate which is so mild even in winter, that there is no need for central heating systems in the houses. Since they have been hosts to visitors since the Etruscans sailed into their bays 1200 years ago, their concept of history is incomprehensible to Americans who can only trace back 200 years. I believed that what artifacts remained from antiquity would be found in the archeological museum on Elba. I eagerly anticipated this on my return trip to Elba, to personally see and explore the unknown.

On my return visit to Elba I acted the tourist. Armed with two years of research on Napoleon and the little I could find about ancient Elban history, I was prepared to see all that I had only read about. I made arrangements with my Italian cousins who offered to let me stay at their apartment, in Porto Azzuro. Most people seem to live in apartments rather than houses, in Italy. This apartment had a very pleasant mountain view off the balcony which ran the entire length of the kitchen and dining area of the railroad

flat. It hardly mattered that there was no phone, television, or radio in this fully furnished two bedroom apartment. It did include a fully equipped kitchen with cooking utensils and lead crystal wine glasses and fine china in the dining room. It made a comfortable base from which to explore the island by day and come back evenings and write.

Before arriving I had located the car rentals, bus and ferry schedules and made a flexible agenda to include an index of all the museums and art I could absorb in one month. Would a month be enough to quench this thirst for more information and research? My briefcase was packed with plans and maps and schedules when the plane landed in Rome. My cousin Maria Teresa Signorini was there to meet us with a luxury van large enough to include the five pieces of luggage I was certain we needed. First on my list of museums would be along our drive north to Tuscany. On the phone before leaving home, while making last minute arrangements with them in Italian, I had mentioned stopping at the Etruscan tombs at Tarquinia, perhaps for lunch, on the way to Elba.

Soon the long drive from the Rome airport was broken up by stop for a lovely lunch at a garden cove restaurant, Ristorante Brizi, right off the main highway in Tarquinia.

I was eager to get lunch done and see the tombs. The food was difficult to describe since I don't know what I ate, but it was the usual two or three courses including fish and pasta. Not wanting to reveal my dislike for fish, I smiled and nodded nervously when they announced happily and rubbing their hands together that it was octopus season. Excitement blurred my attempts to communicate, exclusively in Italian, and I pushed the food around my plate, making little hills and valleys, as I tried to explain what my project was about. In the typical Italian nonchalance about definite plans my cousin nevertheless nodded and decided to join me at some of the places even she had never seen. After a three course meal, including dessert and coffee, we boarded the van and I gasped as our driver sped past the turn off to the road which led to the Etruscan tombs? Either I hadn't adequately communicated that this was part of my agenda or they had no interest. I looked over at my cousin whose head was bobbing around in an after meal snooze. Too late. The driver ignored me or I hadn't made myself understood. This was my last chance to see this important site because we were scheduled to fly back from a completely different direction, by way of Florence on our return to Rome. That was that! I couldn't see the beautiful frescos on the tombs. Slightly stunned, I mentally crossed it off my list



Octopus Season

October

at a rapid rate while she interrogated me about a million personal facts. She was as curious about my American culture as I was about hers, still I thought I'd better save the questions I had about the workings of the bidet until later. I looked at how each of us typified our cultures. I was an American dressed in jeans and comfortable sneakers. She, like the well to do Etruscan woman, was dressed in laces and silks and accessorized with a large alligator purse, matching shoes, and 18k gold jewelry and diamonds covering her neck, arms and fingers. This adventure was just beginning and I was to find out as the month went on how different we could be. An irrepressible smile lit my face as the outline of the island of Elba came into clear view on the bow of the ferry. I snatched my camera, aha! The first glimpse and I got it!

My first amazement was to rediscover my old friend Angelo waiting to greet us when we arrived at the villa. He had come the moment he discovered I was arriving. Looking back now, I realize that this was the moment that I lost control of the timetable I had constructed. He graciously volunteered to be our transportation, and we didn't need to rent a car and take our chances on these dangerous roads.

He spoke English and could translate. Since he was born on the island and knew it better than I did, who could be a more perfect guide. What luck! It was an offer I couldn't refuse. We got settled in the Porto Azzuro condo and planned to meet Angelo at 10 a.m. the next day.

When my husband and I were alone, unpacking, I mentioned that I was somewhat surprised that after only sparse contacts between Angelo and myself in the interim two years since our brief reunion, that he was ready and waiting when we got there. My husband mumbled that he wasn't surprised and had fully expected him to show up. I heard a "tone" in his voice.

Angelo was on time. Off we were to an overview of the island and some precious picture taking. The breathtaking views were romantic and vast. His fearless maneuvers with the car make me look away, but in it we climbed Mt. Capanne the highest peak on the island and looked over all of Portoferraio and the curved natural defense of its shape which had warded off pirates in the 16th century. We saw the tower of San Giovanni, from the Pisan era (see photo of tower and Sunday male gathering).

Since Angelo felt he knew how to show me Elba better than I knew what to ask to see I very gently



Tower of San Giovanni

built on rock - 12th century



Sunday Male Gatherings

suggested that I wished to see several museums including the mask of Napoleon at Misericordia Church and the archeological museum with the remains of the Etruscan's history. He grumbled that history was not important in tourism today. I wondered about the two years I'd just spent in so many musty libraries reading what other people thought. Another whack at my agenda was silently recorded.

One of our first guided tours was of the town where we were staying. We had to know the location of the bank, the groceries, the tobacconist for stamps and various places we needed to find during our stay. I noticed the people watching us. Weren't these the decendents of the same provincials who gaped at Napoleon? Their customs took shape as I observed them in return.

Every afternoon at 2 pm the shops close until 5 for siesta. That means every shop. If you forgot to get something, you wait, no choice. During this time the families gather at home for their main meal of the day, after which a nap or some other quiet time activity is the norm. Between 5 and 8 pm the streets are full again for last minute shopping and gossiping; kids making evening plans on their scooters, and men laughing in groups by the harbor of yachts and sailboats. The evening meal is customarily lighter and

modest sized like our lunch. So lacking in topics of interest was this town of Porto Azzuro, that my presence was temporarily the main event. I was escorted around by my cousin and introduced to many of her curious friends. Everywhere we went, people would notice us, stop talking and watch or nod. I can't be sure but I think some adolescents were even following us. When my friendly smiles weren't returned I found out that smiling isn't customary politeness as it is in the states. They insist on a reason to smile. Someone remarked that most of the inmates at the asylum were smiling. They didn't know how serious life is. I wasn't comfortable with this, it still felt like they were staring at me. The differences in gait were also striking. Italians almost uniformly walk briskly and as if they are heading somewhere in particular at all times, even if they're not. Clothes are so expensive there, that they wear them a long time, perhaps long after they are out of style. I wondered how they knew we were Americans, and there we were strolling around in new clothes smiling at everyone. Economy is always a major factor in the decisions made by Elbans. They don't like to waste money since it is so difficult to judge whether the tourist season will be good or not. The Mercado is a weekly event which takes place in a parking lot and is similar to a flea market. They had

everything you could imagine for sale. The gamut ranged from clothing, (including inexpensive non designer jeans which I thought they couldn't get) to housewares, fresh flowers and especially fresh produce and foods. The event takes place each Saturday morning in the parking lot under Angelo's balcony and had to be cleared of cars the night before. Early every Saturday morning the vendors quickly set up their booths and strip them down by siesta time at 2 p.m. It reminded me of a visiting carnival without the rides. They saw me coming. The smiling idiot "La Americana" was charged several dollars for a tiny cheese grater that was worth a quarter. I tried bargaining but he stuck to his guns. I decided he really needed the money and gave it to him. Getting soaked for as much as possible was our experience all over Italy. They believe we have more money than they do and we should share it with them. If you don't pay one way, you will another. We weren't pick pocketed on Elba because they knew my cousin's family, but in Florence, on a crowded bus of strangers, we lost all the cash we were carrying and didn't even feel the bump! I call this the *American tax*. It isn't just Italian, we have had similar experiences in several European countries and thereby donated to their poor.

Like American families, the Elbans also watch Television

every night but these movies in the United States might be considered too sexy even for cable. The island is hooked up to satellites for television and telephone reception in this modern age but the computer in every home hasn't happened in Elba, yet. *Elbalink* is a webpage that is run from the main port of Portoferraio by Massimo Fubini, the webmaster. His father Franco owns the bookstore called "*Il Libraio*" where I purchased several books on Elba and Napoleon and pirates. I attempted to meet the people with whom I had only email contact across the Atlantic but they had already traveled to their out of season home and advertising business in Milan when I arrived.

Their daily routines are not unlike our own with getting up to go to work. We didn't miss the alarm clock we forgot. The neighbors in nearby apartments were up bright and early shouting orders loud enough for all to hear. The sound of Italian opera and American rock echoed between the condos around us and mingled with the cooking smells of tomato sauce. From the condo balcony we had a spectacular view of a mountain with a cross erected at its summit. The sky was filled with stars at night. Everyone had a balcony it seemed. Most were covered with some flowers, at least geraniums, even in October. Flowers seem to bloom all year round on Elba. The sights, the sounds, and the smells all

affirmed the difference in the culture on Elba.

I could not dictate the agenda but I was determined to see Napoleon's death mask on this trip. Dr Antonacchi, the exiled ruler's personal physician on St. Helena transferred his deathbed features for posterity. Right now, I was posterity and even though Angelo wasn't sure where it was located I was determined to see the face of the man who had fascinated me for two years. I located a city map of Portoferraio and with Angelo's help, hunted it down. We found the Misericordia Church and walked up a seemingly endless staircase to the entrance only to wait while the little man in charge argued with someone he called Marcello. There were no other tourists lined up to see Napoleon's mask. He made us wait. Finally he waved his hand disgustedly at Marcello and led us down a dark corridor to a small room at the end of the stone church. I gasped. There, in a glass case shoved off in a dimly lit corner of a tiny, cold, dingy, run down room of the church, was the face of the great emperor Napoleon! Beside the face mask in the same glass case, is a cast of his child size hand. The case is flanked on one side by the Italian flag and on the other by the French. There is a copy of the flag with the three bees and a drawing of Napoleon and Josephine on the wall. His black coffin with the name Napoleon is on the other side

of the room to complete the sullen atmosphere. Yet this was still the biggest thrill of all for me, to see the actual face of Napoleon. Even though this is typical tourist fare I couldn't miss the opportunity to experience it. What is good about organized tours is that they collect the most interesting and valued sites in an area and show the highlights of its historical or cultural relevance. Our friend Angelo was not a paid guide but a kind volunteer and wanted to take us to places I didn't read about. After I saw Napoleon's face mask at Misericordia I was happy. (see photo of Napoleon's death mask)

The man who sat behind the desk at Misericordia and made us wait a long time before letting us into the little room with the relics, apologized by telling us a curious story. He pointed to the man with whom he had been having a disagreement, Marcello, and told us he was one of "them", the Whites. The **Blacks** from Misericordia church and the **Whites** from Holy Sacrament church located on the same street have competed for generations. Rival cemeteries just outside of town belonging to these two confraternities have accumulated much mutual bad feelings concerning this mask. The Blacks wear hooded black robes to hide their identities in order to do good anonymously while its counterpart the Whites, have only the curtains from Napoleon's house as



Napoleon's Death Mask
His Hand Cast
The Flag of Elba



their memento. Jealousy over these relics has even erupted into violence. The Blacks, in possession of the Mask of Napoleon's face put on the grand annual mass procession and ceremonies every May 5 in celebration of the anniversary of his coming to Elba. The Whites can only display the curtains from his home. This is the grudge that has led to many subplots which are still active today and about which these men were still arguing.

During the history of Elba, the second leading industry, after iron mining was always tunny fishing. On the road leading west from Portoferraio for about four miles we passed the place where some of the **tuna fishing** took place. Napoleon had hoped to tap them for funds but time was short, because Europe was in political turmoil and other opportunities got ahead of these plans. While the tuna were plenty many natives historically made their livings for centuries, fishing at Enfolia, Portoferraio and Marciana Marina. Tuna fishing closed down when insufficient quantities were caught to make it worthwhile. It was an interesting story that Angelo's fisherman father had told him about how the fish were surrounded and captured by the fishermen 100 years ago. These tuna were said to be as

large as a man of small stature or a child.¹ The short season for these fish forced the effort and cooperation of the group for maximum success. It helped to know that every year the tuna arrived in May from the Canary islands and always took the same side of the harbor. They were caught in nets that spread nearly two miles from one corner of the bay and along the shore. They would pour oil on the water if the water was not clear enough, or boats full of dirt were dropped behind the school to drive them further onto the shore. The fishermen on barges hummed a low sound as they went to work festooning the net. The large organized effort eventually was self defeating as the numbers lessened with each passing generation. The fisherman's songs live on. Today, however, they sing from yachts.

As we continued our journey along the east coast and south we came to the isthmus of Capoliveri. It is different from the surrounding area. It is less mountainous at the highest point, Monte Calamita, which is about 1300 feet. The accent, in Italian, is on the third syllable (Ca-la-MI-ta) and means magnet, referring to the magnetic qualities of the

¹Wolff, Henry Drummond, Sir, *The Island Empire; or, Scenes of the First Exile of the Emperor Napoleon I. Together with a Narrative of His Residence on the Island of Elba*, (London: T. Bosworth, 1855). I found that this fish story was actually backed up by an old book.

oxide of iron. The lodestones in this area were said to play havoc with the compasses of passing ships involving them in the danger of a "calamita" a calamity. Some of the many superstitious people according to our friend Erberto, still believe that it still plays havoc with the compasses of passing airplanes. Capoliveri has steep cliffs and many untouched bays. Any history of Elba has a section about how Capoliveri got its name. Debtors from prison were sent there beginning in Roman times where they were free to walk around inside the walls of the city. The original in Latin is "Libertus" meaning freedom. They had a limited liberty here and history notes this place as a home for law breakers. The bad reputation of the town is turned around and touted by its inhabitants as a warning not to provoke them. They chased Napoleon's tax collectors away and still today have known vendettas, as they do in Sicily. The medieval little streets of the town have winding corridors connecting them. Ancient buildings are still standing but used by new tenants. One photo I took is an alcove alley that goes clear through the mountain and one can see the flowers on the other side. There are flowers everywhere even in an ancient upturned barrel alongside an archaic tavern. I could almost picture the pirates slinking down these streets knives in hand laying in wait for their prey.

(See photo of Capoliveri)

I finally decided to completely set aside my agenda. Now I understand why that cliché saying "when in Rome you must do as the Romans" started in Italy. So I went along with our persuasive fun-loving friend and guide, Angelo, wherever he decided to take us. I wasn't sorry. It was getting good. Most evenings after touring for hours he would take us to his small 4th floor walk up studio apartment and cook us a delicious simple meal. His hobby of mushroom picking made porcini mushrooms very tasty, and a part of almost every meal while they were in season. They accompanied sausages, fish, meats and pastas. He had honed his culinary expertise in America where he had owned several restaurants. He liked cooking and pleasing his guests. Wine was served and even though I don't drink wine with every dinner, on Elba I did and it felt natural. The water wasn't drinkable so it had to be purchased and for a few dollars more, one drank wine. This might be part of the reason that I felt friendlier and caught myself smiling for no reason in particular most of the time.

In Porto Azzuro the family lunched at a restaurant on a platform built over the sea, The Delphino. Just beyond the curve of the mountain there is the inland road to the



Capoliveri

town and seascapes



Sanctuary on **Monserato**. It was built on the orders of the Spanish Governor in the 17th century. Instead of a great monastery at the end of a rocky red quartz road that winds up a steep mountain, is a small church on a ledge protruding in the center surrounded by a continuous high jagged cliff. Here processions for the Virgin Mary every year got families out together to picnic. The long arduous trail was the penance for a year of sinning. Angelo said some devotees showed their fervor by climbing barefoot. A man made stone wall from some ancient time extended about 100 ft into the mountain and must have been an aqueduct for the small stream that forks into twin gullies flanking the shrine. There are no guard rails and it is not for acrophobics. (see photo of Monserato)

Just to the south lies the town of Magazzini where the church of **San Stefano** is found. It is also in the Pisan 11th century Romanesque style. The view from here gives one a sense of the enormity of nature and the smallness of our human concerns. It is a common tourist stop because of the view and great picture taking opportunity. There was a picture of it in the guidebook. Our friend made sure we saw everything picturesque including the giant cactus figs that grow wild. (see photos of San Stefano and cactus figs.)



**Monserrato Mountain
Church**





San Stefano Church

12th Century



Cactus Figs

The northwest region of **Marciana** is a long climb around narrow roads past scenic views of the sea. Some passes inside the mountain were so narrow and curved that we had to honk the car horn to let anyone coming from the other side know we were there. There was netting along the cliff side to prevent avalanches. I wondered if the horn honking ever instigated rock falling. It was chestnut season. We tried to learn the art of chestnut picking. They have to be a certain size, and color to be considered ripe enough to be worthwhile and are hiding in a porcupine like outer covering that is so prickly that even the expert pulls it apart with his shoes. The season is short and tourists were out with baskets collecting delectable chestnuts for roasting and eating plain as we did, or grinding into a flour and making the famous Tuscan pancake called *polenta* which has a rather bland and perhaps acquired taste. My father loved it dry but others suggest a red tomato sauce. It varies with the region of Tuscany. The mountain is covered with slim Tuscan pines and a variety of green foliage at multilevels on the mountain. The setting was eerily serene with only the subdued forest sounds of birds, frogs, and locusts. I had a spiritual experience in this forest. I felt at one with nature. I understood something silent and reverent in the scent and texture of the earth, overhung with sky-blocking



Marciana Forest Path

Chestnut Season





Map II
Ferry System to Corsica

another ferry going west to Sardinia, which takes nine hours. After these nine hours it is necessary to get a ferry at Caligari, on Sardinia, to take you another three hour trip to Corsica. A good analogy would be if we in Indiana, had to go to Hawaii to get to Michigan. This is the only way to get there. When asked why this was so the Italian travel agent simply replied, "This is Italy". You wonder why there are no water taxis directly to a neighboring island. "Nobody goes there from here". To make a special ferry wouldn't be profitable for the low usage. That's a total of fourteen hours on ferries not including the time of waiting between ferries to get to an island located directly alongside Elba and can actually be seen from Capoliveri. It should take less than an hour in a boat or plane. I was fuming about this chink in my plans for weeks before the trip just as any stress oriented anal retentive American would be. I want everything now. The Italians laugh at us. Nothing is that important, we are all going to die, what's the fuss for?

At Marina di Campo there is a small airport called "Latoscana" which has access for only special aircraft that can take off and land on the available cement track which is limited to approximately 1,200 meters. There are regular connections to nearby international airports such as Pisa,

Milan, Zurich and Monaco. I was introduced by our influential guide to the airport director, Riccardo Bartolini, a nervous elderly man with a large mole on his face which almost distracted me from listening to how limited the space was, and why. It seems that they cannot widen the airport to encourage larger tourism and big American planes because they haven't enough land. The surrounding area is privately owned and I couldn't translate "eminent domain" to ask why it wasn't done as it is in the States. This man would have been a fop in the French Revolutionary period. He had some sort of nasal drip that required constant touching up which made shaking hands not an option for me after this. While this man is director of the airport, it is clear that no larger planes will have a chance to land there. He explained that they are a small island and they like it that way. I got the impression that a lot of American tourists like myself would be considered an invasion. There was no light chit chat, out we went and glad of it. (see photo of airport)

Through a constant flow of information from Angelo and others, a clearer picture of tourism began to emerge. Central to grasping the concept of this vital economic function was the opinion of the young director at Le Calanchiole Resort in Capoliveri. Graziano Signorini is not



Latoscana Airport



only the third generation in this thriving tourist business but also a world traveler who has business connections in many parts of Europe. He is a young man of few choice words except when he must make his point. He is my cousin's only child and in charge of directing the activities of all the family members and employees involved in the family businesses especially that of resort catering and camping. His view of tourism was simply put. It will never grow beyond a certain point because they don't want it to. They are not greedy for the American dollar. They have enjoyed the primarily German markets which comprise about 80 percent of the present tourists. I noted an *accept it* undertone but as an American I don't understand not saturating a market. Yet Graziano's views agreed essentially with Dr. Umberto Gentile, director of tourism for the island. Dr. Gentile commented that they were competing with the French and English tourism for ten percent of the business professionals who typify the demographic composite of their ideal tourist. The shops provide an income for the natives during the season.

Dr. Gentile's suite of offices was impressively located on the main street facing the harbor in the town of Portoferraio. He seemed to be a very busy man and his secretary told me he couldn't see me. I had no appointment.

My friend Angelo stepped up from behind me and asked the lady very politely if she couldn't check again and ask if Dr. Gentile couldn't make time as a personal favor to him, and then he gave her his name. As she strolled away, Angelo reminded her once more to mention *his* name. She returned very shortly and urged us to go right upstairs. I was only granted an interview by virtue of my association with Angelo, who it turns out, has numerous connections everywhere. He has 450 relatives on this island alone so he opened doors I could never have on my own. Mr.. Gentile, a tall, well dressed man, who looked like his roots were not from Elba, was typically unimpressed by Americans but was polite and attentive to Angelo. He offered books in Italian about the minerals and the flora and fauna and many other topics one could not find elsewhere. I found translating more work than much of it was worth for this project. Yet Mr. Gentile who held his post for more than a generation, did know why there wasn't a rush of Americans on the island. It is because it is just far enough away to make it impractical as a day trip, as they do on Capri, with their boat loads of tourists every half hour. Elba is larger and there is much more to explore so that a few days are required. This in turn requires more deliberate planning. It cannot be included in the usual tours, from Central Italy

tours or Globus because of its location and to include it on a tour would be a long three or four days, much time spent in travel. I have experienced such side trips and understand how this island's remoteness might discourage its addition. One would have to know where one wants to go and have transportation, etc., which complicates matters almost to the point of exclusion. He went on that they do a very nice European tourist trade especially since WWII when the Germans occupied it. They have been coming back ever since. Many of the menus in the restaurants in Porto Azzuro accommodated this loyalty, by printing their menus half in Italian and half in German.

The tourist year begins in late April or May and is the shoulder of the summer season that begins to grow in June. August, everyone agrees, is a circus and the streets are crowded with tourists. In the autumn shoulder season of September and October the masses of visitors drops off and many hotels and businesses that cater to the transients close down for the year. Many of the people on the island can now do their traveling and take their own vacations. November ends the short season of chestnut gathering and the warm weather begins to chill down to 50 degrees. December is full of Christmas preparations and the winter sleep begins. Before you notice time has passed it is **Carnivale**

time in February, before Lent and people are glad to end the forced time spent staying warm without central heating. Great pride is taken in the making and display of their costumes and when they dance in the streets, it is with a stranger. Everyone stays masked and you don't know who your partner is. The fun is in trying to guess. This revelry lasts about a week until Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Preparations and repairs and maintenance are begun on the tourist catering businesses and the cycle continues year after year. We took part in the street dancing and Angelo was still a marvelous tango expert. Dancing is a favorite activity as is all types of entertainment and music (see photo of street entertainment).

Angelo, contributed constant input about the culture and knew the differences because he had lived both on Elba and in America. He ran for mayor of Porto Azzuro last year and so his many contacts were current. Although they give lip service to the idea that they want to increase tourism, the fact remains that they cannot find a way to enlarge the airport to accommodate this scheme. They work as hard they can already. Contrary to my personal experience, most tourists aren't attracted to Elba for its rich history but rather its natural beauty and ambiance (see family photos).



Street dancing & Entertainment





Family Photographs

- top row left
Maria Teresa & Ottorino Signori
- top row right
Maria Teresa I & II
- center row left
Graziano & Martina (daughter)
- center row right
Alicia & Graziano & Baby Carlo
- bottom row left
Signorini
- bottom row right
Aunt Eda Calastri
- Erberto & Angioletta Bandini**

Epilogue

My odyssey to Elba taught me much about history, geography and social psychology. The more we are different, the more we are the same and the human element that connects us all over the world is getting even closer via computers and satellites. However, I saw that the people of Elba, as described in DeBerneaud's 1814 book, seemed to have changed little. Subjected as they have been to changing conquerors, a residue of moody, dissatisfaction which questions fate, remains a basic characteristic. Their provincial rusticity is clung to and made into a code of their own, which keeps them distinguished from other Italians. It is enhanced by their distance from the mainland, (accessibility challenged?) yet the commerce of television and computers could be changing this with the youngest generation. They now choose to isolate themselves and do not seek out the rest of the world. We seek them out and become their tourists. I admire the traditional culture that has grown out of the necessity to survive as it must, where it must. Most of all, the splendor of nature which awed me, is not taken for granted by the natives of Elba. They respect

their environment and are focused on using but not abusing their resources by trying to replace what they take and rebuild what breaks down.

Our cultures have differences as in the social customs of not smiling but genuineness is universal in any language.

A prime example of this is the constantly charming

*Galantuomo*¹, Angelo, who shared more than meals with us.

The greatest gift he gave to us both was his act of spiritual love. There was a potentially volatile situation that began when we became reacquainted. A lesser man than my husband would have been jealous. A greedier man than Angelo would have disregarded a lady's reputation and a woman more vain than myself might have tested her aging wiles, just once more. It was abated by the honorable interaction of three individuals who held each other in enough mutual esteem to share the gift of true spiritual love.

A very shortened version of a tale from Boccaccio's *Decameron*² tells the story of a successful love triangle

¹Man of Honor

²Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, translated by G. H. Mc William, (Franklin Center, Pennsylvania: The Franklin Library, 1981.) Divided into days by story teller, this is the tenth day, fifth story. This collection of short tales is the history of the short story itself since they inspired Chaucer and his tales..

much more eloquently than I can. Since this entire adventure began with my father's stories, it is appropriate that it should end with another Italian one. It tells the story of what true love from the heart and not just the body can mean and how honor rewards itself with even greater love.

A noblewoman called Madonna Diana. She was married to a most agreeable and good natured man, of wealth and power whose name was Gilberto. Because of her outstanding worth, this lady attracted the undying love of a great and noble lord called Messer Ansaldo Gualdras, a man of high stature, famous throughout the land for his feat of arms and deeds of courtesy. But although he loved her fervently and did everything he possibly could to persuade her to requite his love, sending her numerous messages, all his efforts were to no avail. However finally she rejected his advances he still persisted in loving and importuning her so she decided to rid herself of him once and for all by requesting him to do something for her that was both bizarre and as she thought, impossible. So one day she said to the woman who regularly came to see her on Messer Ansaldo's behalf:

"You have repeatedly assured me that Messer Ansaldo loves me above all else and have offered me sumptuous gifts on his behalf, all of which I prefer that he should keep for they could never induce me to submit to his pleasure. If only I could be certain that he loved me as much as you claim, I could undoubtedly bring myself to love him. If he will offer me proof of his love by doing what I intend to ask of him, I shall be only too ready to obey his commands."

A BEAUTIFUL MAY GARDEN

IN THE PROVINCE OF FRIULE, which is cold but richly endowed with beautiful MOUNTAINS, RIVERS AND STREAMS THERE IS A TOWN CALLED UDINE WHERE THERE ONCE LIVED A BEAUTIFUL NOBLEWOMAN CALLED MADONNA DIANORA. SHE WAS MARRIED TO A MOST AGREEABLE AND GOOD NATURED MAN, OF WEALTH AND POWER WHOSE NAME WAS GILBERTO. BECAUSE OF HER OUTSTANDING WORTH, THIS LADY ATTRACTED THE UNDYING LOVE OF A GREAT AND NOBLE LORD CALLED MESSER ANSALDO GRADENSE, A MAN OF HIGH REPUTE, FAMOUS THROUGHOUT THE LAND FOR HIS FEAT OF ARMS AND DEEDS OF COURTESY. BUT ALTHOUGH HE LOVED HER FERVENTLY AND DID EVERYTHING HE POSSIBLY COULD TO PERSUADE HER TO REQUITE HIS LOVE, SENDING HER NUMEROUS MESSAGES, ALL HIS EFFORTS WERE TO NO AVAIL. HOWEVER FIRMLY SHE REJECTED HIS ENTREATIES HE STILL PERSISTED IN LOVING AND IMPORTUNING HER SO SHE DECIDED TO RID HERSELF OF HIM ONCE AND FOR ALL BY REQUESTING HIM TO DO SOMETHING FOR HER THAT WAS BOTH BIZZARE AND AS SHE THOUGHT, IMPOSSIBLE. SO ONE DAY SHE SAID TO THE WOMAN WHO REGULARLY CAME TO SEE HER ON MESSER ANSALDO'S BEHALF:

"YOU HAVE REPEATEDLY ASSURED ME THAT MESSER ANSALDO LOVES ME ABOVE ALL ELSE AND HAVE OFFERED ME SUMPTUOUS GIFTS ON HIS BEHALF, ALL OF WHICH I PREFER THAT HE SHOULD KEEP FOR THEY COULD NEVER INDUCE ME TO SUBMIT TO HIS PLEASURE. IF ONLY I COULD BE CERTAIN THAT HE LOVED ME AS MUCH AS YOU CLAIM, I COULD UNDOUBTEDLY BRING MYSELF TO LOVE HIM. IF HE WILL OFFER ME PROOF OF HIS LOVE BY DOING WHAT I INTEND TO ASK OF HIM, I SHALL BE ONLY TOO READY TO OBEY HIS COMMANDS."

"And what is it Madam that you want him to do", the good woman asked.

"What I want is that in the month of January, now approaching, I want a garden, somewhere near the town that is full of green plants, flowers, and leafy trees exactly like the month of May. If he fails at this, then let him take care not to send you to me anymore or I will no longer keep this a secret and rid myself of his attentions by telling my husband and the family."

When he heard the lady's proposition the gentleman felt she was asking him to do something very difficult, and realized that she was dashing his hopes but something inside of him wouldn't let him give up. He inquired in every part of the world as to who could assist him in this matter and eventually located a man who offered to do it by magic provided he was paid well enough. So Messer Ansaldo agreed to pay him a huge sum of money and waited for the time the lady had appointed. During the month of January when the cold was most intense the magician employed his skills to such good effect that in a meadow not far from the town there appeared one of the fairest gardens that anyone had ever seen, with plants and trees and fruits of every kind. Messer Ansaldo picked a variety of the fruits and flowers and had them sent to the lady as proof and invited her to come and see the garden she had asked for. This would make her realize how much he loved her and recall her pledge in the manner of a gentleman.

The lady heard many reports of the garden and when she saw the flowers and

fruits began to repent her promise. With several ladies of the town she went to the garden and astonished went home in despair thinking of what it obliged her to do. Unable to conceal her distress from her husband, his urging finally forced her to tell him the whole story.

Gilberto was angry at first, but after mature reflection, bearing in mind the purity of his wife's intentions, he put it aside and told her that no wise woman should listen to messages of that sort nor should she have bartered her chastity with anyone despite the impossible terms. The power of words received by the heart through the ears is greater than many people think and to those who are in love nearly everything becomes possible. Because he understood that his wife had acted only on the purest of motives he told her that he would allow what no other husband would perhaps partly because of his fear of the magician's mischief. He would ask her to go to him and ask to be released from this promise. If this failed just for once she could give him her body, but not her heart. The lady protested but Gilberto was adamant.

So the next morning the lady went to her admirer and Messer Ansaldo greeted her courteously and reverently without any show of passion after which she told him why she had come.

"Sir, I am here because I was ordered by my husband to come because he gives way to your unruly love more than his own, or his wife's reputation. Sir with his permission I submit to your every pleasure."

GREAT AS MESSER ANSALDO'S ASTONISHMENT HAD BEEN WHEN THE LADY ARRIVED, HEARING HER WORDS AND GILBERTO'S LIBERALITY, REALLY SHOCKED HIM. IT WAS THEN THAT HIS ARDOR TURNED TO COMPASSION.

"My lady," he said, *"since it is as you say I would not ruin the reputation of one who shows compassion for my love. Therefore while you are under my roof or in my presence I shall treat you exactly as if you were my sister. You may convey my thanks to your husband for the immense courtesy he has shown me and you may look upon me always in the future as your brother and friend."*

PLEASED, THE LADY THANKED HIM FOR HIS DEMONSTRATION OF TRUE LOVE AND WENT HOME TO TELL HER HUSBAND. FROM THAT DAY ON GILBERTO AND MESSER ANSALDO BECAME THE CLOSEST OF LOYAL FRIENDS. THE MAGICIAN, AS WELL, PERCEIVING THE DISPLAY OF REAL LOVE AND MOVED BY THE SENTIMENTS ABOUT HIM WOULD TAKE NO MONEY FOR HIS EFFORTS.

NOW THAT MESSER ANSALDO'S LUSTFUL PASSION REGARDING THE LADY HAD BEEN PURGED, HE WAS INSPIRED TO REGARD HER WITH DEEP AND LIMITLESS AFFECTION. LOVE IS ITS OWN REWARD.

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